



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
*1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

February 24, 2004

The Honorable Stephen Johnson, Chair
Senate Education Committee
107 Irving Newhouse Building
Post Office Box 40447
Olympia, Washington 98504-0447

Dear Senator Johnson:

We are writing as the Chair of the State Board of Health and the Chair of the Board's Committee on Children's Health and Well-Being to share our support for the goals of Substitute Senate Bill 5436, which your committee is scheduled to hear tomorrow.

The Board is very concerned about the rapidly rising rates of obesity among our youth and its wide range of attendant health risk factors. In fact, the Board has made it a priority to encourage local school boards to work with local boards of health to adopt policies and practices (based on science and best practice) to improve the fitness and nutritional well being of school-aged children.

As part of our 2003–2005 workplan, the Board is working with six local health jurisdictions (in Clark, Benton-Franklin, King, Pierce, Island, and Thurston counties), along with a host of other partners, to conduct community forums that will support and reinforce local community efforts to improve children's physical activity and nutrition status. These forums will allow members of the Board to work with local boards of health and representatives of local school boards to promote programs and policies that encourage children to choose health-promoting foods, be physically active, and be ready to learn at school.

In sum, the Board supports the concept of offering children more healthy food options in schools and has been working to encourage schools to adopt sound policies and practices to improve the nutritional well being and fitness of their student populations. For this reason, we respectfully suggest that the bill be amended to add the State Board of Health to the list of collaborators on the advisory committee established by this legislation to develop a model policy. The Board has consistently shown leadership in this area and is currently working in partnership with several school districts to adopt policies and practices to improve the fitness and nutritional well being of school aged children. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Lake, M.B.A., Chair
Washington State Board of Health

Vickie Ybarra, R.N., Chair
Children's Health & Well-Being Subcommittee

cc: Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles
Washington State Board of Health Members
Craig McLaughlin, State Board of Health
Mich'l Prentice Needham, Governor's Executive Policy Office
Steve Meyer, Department of Health
Greg Williamson, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction